

T W O
S E R M O N S

Concerning

Nature and Grace.

Preach'd at

W H I T E - H A L L,
A P R I L, 1699.

B Y

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L O N D O N :

Printed by *W. Bowyer*, for *Walter Kestilby*, at the
Bishop's Head in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. 1700.

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TO THE
Honourable Auditory
IN
WHITE-HALL,
At whose Request these
SERMONS
Are Published,
The AUTHOR
Dedicates them with all Respect,
And his humble WISHES for their
Eternal Welfare.

TO THE
Honourable Assembly

W H T T H A L L

At whose Request

TESTERMONS

Are Published

The A U T H O R

Declares them with all his Heart

And his humble WISHES for their

General Welfare

SERMON I.

St. MATTH. XXVI. 35.

Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.

THE Words bespeak us to contemplate a Just and Dutiful Resolution; made by a Man that had both as much Conscience to engage him in what was fit, and as much Courage to execute what he had engaged in, as any other of Mankind must ever pretend to. And yet this Resolution was not kept, it failed very disgracefully: And my chief Purpose at this time is to enquire into the Causes, How it came so to fail. In order to which, it will lie in my way to premise somewhat more of the Character of the Person.

Peter (we know) was a Man of Precedency, and *Above* the rest of the Disciples:
And

And he was likewise one of such Vertues and Qualifications, as seem to have recommended him to that Precedency, more than did the Advantage of his Years. He was a Man of real and tender Goodness: And this is sufficiently evident from that Passage at his first Admission to our Saviour's Acquaintance (St. Luke 5.) when being awakened by the miraculous Draught of Fishes, and knowing that the Author must necessarily be from God, he fell down at his Feet, and broke out into this humble and pious Reflexion, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!* The Censure indeed expresses him a *sinful* Man; but so to censure *himself*, implies more effectually than any thing else could, that he was a Good Man: And though the Words — *Depart from me* — carry in them the Face of Fear, yet he who heard them, and knew the Heart of the Speaker, found that they carried in them a greater measure of Desire; for Peter was not willing to be rid of his new Guest, but only longing to be made more worthy of his Conversation.

He was a Man of great Love to his Master, and of no less Zeal for his Religion: Of which, from among many, I shall take
one

one Instance out of St. *John* 6. Where, upon the Desertion of several other Disciples, our Saviour puts the Question to the Twelve, *Will ye also go away?* Then (says the Text) *Peter answered him, Lord whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* An Answer so wise and faithful, so evidencing his confirmed Choice of the Better Part, that God seems to have rewarded him for it with the Grace of an immediate Revelation; the Matter whereof follows in the next Words: For thus runs the Text, *Lord whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life:* And then it follows --- *And we believe, and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* Now if we look into St. *Matth.* 16. 17. we see there what our Saviour pronounces concerning this very Confession, (*viz.*) *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for Flesh and Blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* That our Saviour had the words of eternal life, Peter was able to deduce from the Principles of Natural Reason; because Reason was able to judge from the Internal Characters of his Doctrine, That it was worthy of God, and accommodated properly to advance Humane Nature.

Nature to eternal Happiness : but for all this, Reason could not infallibly determine that the Messenger of this Doctrine was therefore the *Messias*, the : ~~is~~ the *Son*, that is, *the eternal Son of the living God*. To know this, needed a new Illumination : And this Illumination (I say) it seems God vouchsafed him at that instant, as a Reward of that Faith and Choice which he had then declared.

In a word — *Peter* was a Man of Sincerity, Firmness, and Constancy : And for this we need no farther Testimony than that of our Saviour, in conferring upon him the Symbolical Name of *Cephas*, i. e. *a Rock*.

Thus much of his Character being premised, I may be bold to affirm of this his Resolution in the Text, That it was as Honest a one, that is, both as Just in the Matter, and as Sincere in the Intention, as ever was made by any of Mankind, or ever shall be made to the End of the World ; and yet this Resolution miscarried, and ended only in the Shame of the Resolver : For after that *Peter* had declared so stoutly — *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee* — yet he faintly and Coward-like deny'd his Lord,
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without any such Tryal as the imminent fear of dying.

Imagine we now what may have been the cause of this miscarriage, and the defeat of so good a Resolution in so good a Man. His Character will not suffer us to imagine he made it in a braving Dissimulation: No, himself proved himself sufficiently in earnest, by his subsequent behaviour in the Garden; where he drew his Sword against a whole Band of Men, and thereby made it appear that he had less concern for his own Life, than he had for his Master's Safety.

Would we know then how this Resolution came to be abortive? The Reason was purely this ----- *Peter* grounded it upon too much Confidence in Himself; he never doubted of himself, but that he had power to perform that which he did so honestly resolve; and this was the *original* of all his failure.

He resolved honestly, I say; but none may presume to say he resolved wisely: For his Lord had just admonish'd him of his peril of Lapsing, (*v. 31.*) *All ye shall be offended because of me this night: To which*

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Peter

Peter answers confidently, Though all should be offended, yet will not I be offended: To check this Trust in himself, our Saviour rejoyns --- That He in particular should lapse in a manner more scandalous than all the rest; Verily I say unto thee, before the Cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice: But Peter looking upon this Monition no farther than as it imply'd a Reproach to his Faith, and his Love, and his Courage, he summons them up all to form this final Resolve, Tho I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.

But where was his Wisdome, where was his Reflexion in the mean while? It should have been remembred that he who precaution'd him was *the Searcher of Hearts*, and needed not that any should testifie of Man, because he *knew what was in Man*. And therefore in Wisdome Peter ought rather to have distrusted his own Heart, than the Judgment of his Lord, when he suggested that his Heart was deceiving. It ought to have been remembred that his Lord had said before--- *Without me ye can do nothing*; and therefore Peter in Wisdome should not have presumed Ability in himself; but instead of this
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have implored Ability from him, whence all humane sufficiency is derived——Lord, leave not me! that I may not leave thee! Lord, strengthen me by thy Grace that I may not deny thee, and then I shall not deny thee. In this method he had been secure, and prevented his shamefull fall. But instead of this, he builds a Resolution upon his own Strength; and our Lord, to rebuke him, did no other than leave him to *his own strength to perform it*; and this was in effect the same as to leave him under the necessity of *not performing it*.

For this is the main Lesson that this instance teaches us, (*viz.*) That Man when he is left unto himself, is purely weak and insufficient to any thing that is good.

These two Points are evident in *Peter's Case*. 1. That he did not rightly know himself when he made his Resolution. And 2. That the Defeat of his Resolution taught him, that notwithstanding all his particular Graces and Endowments, he was not able to do any thing as he should do, without God's actual Assistance. And therefore, for our present Instruction, I shall draw these two Observations from the Case. 1. That

it is Hard to know our selves. And, 2. That to know our selves Truly, is to know that we are (and that in our best Estate) weak and insufficient of our selves to do any thing that is good.

1. It is hard to know our selves.

By the Knowledge of our selves I intend not the Knowledge of our mechanick Frame; to know by what Ligaments our Soul is united to our Body; or by what mediating Correspondencies they act mutually upon one another; to know in what manner Sensation, or in what Remembrance is performed; what Springs set our involuntary Motions a-work; or what Influence our Will communicates to those that are voluntary: To know this is not simply Hard, but impossible; and it ought to mortifie the Pride of any Man's Understanding, to consider, That the smallest of the Parts we are composed of, and the least of those Acts we are always conversant with, which we see minutely, and live by their being done, do yet escape and surmount our Comprehension.

But if the Knowledge of this part of our selves be impossible, one thing we may infer from the benignity of Providence, That likewise

wise it is not Needful. It would not conduce any thing to the Happiness of Mankind, to be better acquainted with the Philosophy of our Beings: nor do we suffer any thing from the Ignorance of it. The Soul acts as orderly in those that never Enquire, as in those that pretend to determine the chief place of its Residence: and our Pulse beats as well when we think not of it at all, as when we think of it never so wisely.

But the Knowledge here intended is the Knowledge of our *Moral Selves*; of our state in respect of Vertue; whether we really chuse to follow that which is Good, and what Firmness there is in our Choice; whether we make Proficiency in Religion, and whether there be Sincerity in our Pretences; what is the state of our Wills, Inclinations, and Desires; all which the Prophet *Jeremy* means by the word *Heart*, when he thus pronounces concerning it, *The Heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* Who can know it? Not a second; not any one *without* us; this we are sure of. But this is not all: We *ourselves* can hardly know that Heart which we carry in our *own* Breasts: Its Propensions are
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retired and dark; and it is not easie to guess whether the Bent of our Affections will carry us at any time, when their respective occasions offer. Now to be ignorant of our selves in this respect, can never be of an indifferent importance. If we know not our selves, be sure we shall neither disapprove our selves, nor mend our selves; nor will natural Pride fail to take hold of the occasion; that is, To make the best Interpretation of that which we least discern: And so the more Ignorant we are of our selves, the more we shall come to be Opiniative and Conceited.

What false measures Men may take of themselves, we are advertis'd in a remarkable Instance, *Rev. 3.* where our Lord speaks of the *Laodiceans* in these words, *ver. 17.* *Thou say'st I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Now was not this a Judgment of themselves wonderfully erroneous? Wou'd one think it possible that any Man should not be able to discern between Riches and Poverty, Sight and Blindness, being Cloath'd and being Naked? We may justly think

think it impossible in the Literal Sense; but how is it then in the Moral? Is it possible for a vicious Man to think himself Godly? Is it possible for the Churl to account himself Liberal? for the Sensual to account himself Heavenly-minded? for the Negligent to account himself Devout? Is not this equally hard? And yet the Prophet *Isaiah* suggests, Chap. 32. 4. that *when the Eyes of them that see are dim, the Churl may account himself liberal*; and so in the rest: That is, When once indulged Affections have imposed upon the Understanding, and darkned the Soul, and Men are thereupon content to take up with false Notions, and to judge of themselves by false Rules, they may come to esteem themselves Good, though they are absolutely Evil: They may think well of themselves for some casual Acts of Vertue, though in the mean time they live under the Habit of contrary Vices; They may account themselves Religious even while they are Carnal, Worldly, and Immoral: And yet to be Religious, and at the same time to be Immoral, implies as great a Contradiction as is to be found between Riches and Poverty, Sight and Blindness.

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But this indeed is a Deceit so gross, that it cannot pass upon an honest and considerate Mind: And therefore I shall produce some others, that are more refin'd and subtle, and such as may escape the Observation of a more scrupulous Enquiry into our selves. For example.

1. Even when we do well, it is hard to discern from what Principles we act; whether from the Fear and Love of God, which certainly sanctifie; or from external Considerations, which sanctifie not at all, but yet may occasionally produce Actions of the same appearing Goodness.

When our Saviour entertained those that came to hear him with the multiply'd Loaves, and fed their Bodies as well as their Souls (St. John 6.) what a hearty Confession did they break forth into, *ver. 14. This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the World.* How sedulously did they follow him? What pains did they take to be with him? How did they repine at the missing his Conversation but a part of a day? Cou'd any one believe but that these were Disciples mature and steady? and prepared to confess their Master at the peril of their Lives? I question

question not but they believed as much of themselves; and look'd upon themselves as influenc'd altogether with the Spirit of Religion: And yet no sooner did our Saviour give them one just and gentle Rebuke, reproaching them for being more affected with his Loves than with his Doctrine; and instructing them that God's Truth ought not to be follow'd mercenarily; But he discover'd their Feeble, their Cheat, till then unknown even to themselves, and made them discover it to all the World; for 'tis said (ver. 66.) *They took offence at it, and went back, and walk'd no more with him.* And thus it always falls out, when Vertue happens to be attended with Temporal Advantages, as Reputation, Favour, Fortunes, and the like; we can hardly tell, without farther Experiment of our selves, whether we regard Vertue for it self, or only for its Advantages; or whether it be Piety, or simple Appetite, that sets us a-work.

2. It is hard to discern between a Religious State and a Religious Humour; a Religious State, that is founded steadily upon the Grace of God, and a Religious Humour, that springs up hastily from the concurrence

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of outward Accidents, and is as desultory and mutable as the Cause from which it springs.

How often does it happen, that Men upon the Success of Affairs, and Ease of Circumstances, find their Hearts fill'd with Expressions of Thankfulness to God, and Charity to all the World; and yet upon the change of Circumstances they immediately sower both towards God and Man? Now if such Men shall estimate themselves during the Religious Mood, how is it possible but that they should be deceived in the Opinion of their own state? There is but one way possible to prevent their being deceived, and that is the bringing themselves under the Probation of the voluntary Cross, to the Offices of Mortification and Self-denial: But then how hard is it moreover to persuade Men that they are obliged to this officious Probation?

3. It is hard to free our Judgment from those Prejudices and extreme Mutations which it is subject to receive from the different Crasis and State of our Animal Spirits. Thus sometimes, when the Body is vigorous and gay, it shuts out that measure of Fear which is necessary to make us wise; and it suffers

suffers us not to see that Sin we are guilty of, and that lies at our door: And on the other hand, When the Spirits are dejected and low, they often let in such an Excess of Fear as *betrays the Succours of Reason*, and makes Men cruciate themselves with the Apprehensions of Sin, ev'n where there is really none. And hence we have sometimes seen it come to pass, That a Cordial Medicine has quieted a Mind, and set a grieved Conscience at rights: Which Effect could not possibly proceed from That Cause, but upon the present Supposition, (*viz.*) That our Judgments are apt to be impos'd upon and misled by the various Influences of our Body.

4. To judge of our selves without Proof and Tryal, is the sure way to be deceived; and yet it is hard to discern what is the right Method of Proving our selves, and what is our proper Tryal.

What a fair Progress had that Man in the Gospel made towards the Kingdom of God, who told our Saviour, *That he had kept all the Commandments from his Youth*? Nor did he tell it in Hypocrisie; for it is said, that *our Saviour lov'd him*; which could not have

been but for the Truth of what he told: and yet this Man could not bring himself over the Difficulty of parting with his Estate, and becoming a Disciple, though he were promised the Recompense of *Treasure in Heaven*. How many have born up commendably under all the Pressures of Afflictions, and at last sunk in a Calm, and given themselves up vanquish'd to the Enticements of Prosperity? Men of Courage, but not of Caution! And how many, on the other hand, have liv'd commendably in good Fortunes, and at last quitted their Vertue lest their Fortunes should be worsted? Men of Caution, but not of Courage. Thus, I say, No man can make a hasty Conjecture at what is his Proper Tryal. But,

5. When we *have prov'd* our selves, and so may *know* our selves; yet still it is hard to *own* our selves for *such* as we have prov'd our selves to be.

For when we have prov'd our selves to the bottom, as we may do by the Doctrine of the Scripture, and our own Experience, we shall find our selves to be mere Weakness and Emptiness, and without Power in our *Selves* to do any thing well. Now though
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this be a Truth, than which the Word of God delivers none more plainly, nor can our own Experience attest any one more convincingly; yet there lurks in us a natural Pride, which makes us perfectly averſe from Believing it. We love to imagine our ſelves Great; inſomuch that we hate to know our ſelves *otherwise*; and had rather ſuſpect and find fault with the Glaſs that repreſents us under a diminſhing form.

And this was properly *Peter's* Caſe: He had been told with the reſt, by his Maſter, That *without him he could do nothing*: But this was a Leſſon he had no Stomach to retain. He would not doubt but that his Will was in his own Power; and that his Executing Faculties were under the Power of his Will; ſo that what he had Courage to Reſolve, he had likewise Ability to Perform: And this fond Opinion expoſ'd him to that ſhameful Denyal which follow'd upon it.

After I have aſſerted that it is *Hard* to know our ſelves, I am far from countenancing the *ἀγνοΐαν*, the belief that we cannot know our ſelves: This is a Notion fruitful of Miſchiefs: It is a Notion that hinders both Proſiciency and Amendment; that is

contrary both to Faith, and Hope, and Consolation, without which Religion can have neither Fruit nor Root.

Know our selves we *Must*; God requires it; and therefore besure know our selves we *May*: Nay, the Truth is, we may easily know our selves, if we take the right Method to do it. For the common Obstacle of Self-Knowledge is this; That when we go to examine and look into our selves, we look through the wrong End of the Glass: We seek for Greatness and Excellencies wherewithal to *please* our selves; and from this Prospect we are sure to reap nothing but Deceit: But let us turn the Glass, and look patiently upon our Littleness and Defects, whereby to *humble* our selves, and this Prospect will certainly make us wise: For Humility is the True Knowledge of our selves; and he that knows himself to be nothing-worth, knows himself well. Which brings me upon my second Proposition; (*viz.*)

That to know our selves Truly, is to know that we are (and that in our best Estate) absolutely weak and insufficient towards Good.

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Goodness is a Lesson which simple Nature gives us not Capacity to learn. For since the stream of our Affections naturally runs to Ill, say who it is that can Turn that Stream. *Quis potest facere mundum de immundo*, says Holy Job, *Who can make himself clean since he is born unclean?* If our Nature be sinful, though it must be changed, yet we cannot change our Nature: He that makes us better, must be a superiour and better Agent than our selves.

'Tis true, that though we are born Ignorant, we can make our selves Skilful; we can acquire Arts and Sciences by our own Diligence and Study: But the Case is not the same in respect of Goodness. We can acquire Arts and Sciences, because we lie under no Connate Indisposition to that Acquirement; for Nature, though it be corrupt, yet still it is curious and busie after Knowledge; but to Goodness we have naturally an Indisposition that is Invincible: Lusts within and Temptations without set up such a firm Confederacy against it, as we are never able to surmount in our own Strength. And therefore it is evident, that in order to save Mankind, the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to engage

gage in the Work of Sanctification, as well as the Eternal Son did in that of Redemption, from the Beginning of the World.

When we do well, it is the Assistance of God that impowers us to concur in the Act; He removes the Hinderances; He restrains our opposing Lusts; He moves our Will, and draws us to it: And though because of the subsequent Concurrence, the *Act* is graciously imputed Ours, that so we may be intitled to the Reward; yet still the *Power* is God's. Hereupon it is that the Apostle arguing against that mischief that necessarily follows upon Humane Confidence, thus expresses himself, 1 Cor. 10. 12. *ο δὲ δοκῶν ἑαυτὸν ἰσχυρῶς, &c.* *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* Upon which Text a Critick of Name has given his Opinion, That the Participle *δοκῶν* is Redundant, and has no peculiar Signification, because the Sense of the Place is no more than this, *Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.* But it seems to me rather that this Criticism is Redundant, and that *δοκῶν* has not only a Signification there, but the most Emphatical one that can be imagined: For take notice, That he that thinketh he standeth in Goodness, does but
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think so: For no Man *stands* in Goodness; he is only upheld and supported *there*, and graciously kept upright: Wherefore he that *thinketh* he *stands*, is for that very Reason more obnoxious to fall. And that the Apostle means no less in that place, let him be his own Interpreter, *Rom. 11. 20.* where he expresses the Manner how even the best of Men do stand (*viz.*) *Thou standest by Faith.* Now he that stands by Faith stands not by Himself; because Faith is properly a Recumbency or Rest upon *another*. But to make the matter clearer, the Apostle illustrates it by a Resemblance (*ver. 17.*) wherein he instructs us, That a Good Man *stands*, as the Branch of a wild Olive does, when it is grafted into the Good Olive Tree; and that is, not in its *own* Vertue, but in Vertue of the Root; and *such* a Root as is naturally *not its own*. It is Remarkable that the Apostle, in that Passage, calls a Bad Man a *Wild Olive Tree*: a *Wild Olive Tree*; not barely a *Branch*, but a *Tree*; which having a Root of its own, supports it *self*, and stands in its own Strength, and brings forth its own Fruit; And so does Man in respect of the wild and sour Fruit of an ill Conversation:

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He is a *Tree*; has a *Root* of his own, and Sap and Vegetation, and Seminal Fruitfulness, and Power to bring it forth: But in respect of Good, he is only a *Branch*; and all his Fruitfulness, and all his Support, depend upon the Influence and Communications of God. You may see both the Doctrine and the Illustration of it, yet more fully express'd by our Saviour in the beginning of the 15th Chapter of St. *John*.

We may therefore look upon *Sampson* as a Common Emblem of the Dispensations of Grace; and all Men are fortify'd in their *Soul* after the same manner that he was in his *Body*. (For Example :) His Strength lay not in his *Sinews*, but was extrinsical, in his *Locks*; though thence communicated to his *Sinews*: And so our Moral Strength lies not in our *Soul*; for let Reason and Conscience be never so well awaken'd, and our Will never so well inclin'd, and Practice and Custom contribute all they can; yet still our *Soul* has no stock of Strength intrinsic to it self, by which it can sustain it self. Let the Supplies of Grace be once cut off, as it happen'd to *Sampson's Locks*, and (that moment) the Best become weak as other Men.

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Philosophy deceives us in respect of Religious Habits: There is no Habit of that kind *difficultly movable from the Subject*, by reason of any Strength that Practice introduceth into the Subject *it self*: Our Facility of Acting Religiously, is both *acquired and maintained* by the Grace of God; and that Grace being once suspended, the Habit sinks in an instant. *Hezekiah* was an excellent Man; scarce is so much said of the Piety of any Man in Sacred Writ, as of *his*; and yet upon a sudden, in a Transaction with the Embassadors of *Babylon*, he behav'd himself both vainly and profanely; insomuch that (the Text says) *Wrath came upon him for it*; and by that Wrath he was sensible of his Fault, and thereby brought back again to his former Integrity. Now to let us understand how such a disagreeing Failure came to find place in the course of such an excellent Life, the Holy Pen-man has taken care to tell us expressly (2 Chron. 32. 34.) that *in that matter of the Embassadors, God left Hezekiah to himself; to try him, and to prove what was in his heart*; that is, To shew him to himself. --- The very same was *Peter's* Case; How Pious was he in the House? How Cou-

ragious in the Garden? And yet in the Hall both a Coward and a Traditor? Now the Reason of all was --- Because his Master had, for that Interval, left him *to himself*: For the Text says, that *When the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter*, that is, look'd upon him with an Operative Compassion, *Peter* recovered his Strength; and exerted it in an immediate Repentance, and held it perseveringly to a glorious end. --- *Lord, what is Man? what is he without thee?* The Lord has told us plain enough in these Instances, What he is; *Ev'n a thing of nought*.

Let us imagine a Man to be Swimming, and because he could not Swim without it, to be supported by the Chin; To make such a Man sink, there needs no dipping him, no laying Weights upon him, no hampering or entangling his Limbs; withdraw but the Hand, and he necessarily sinks *of himself*. And in like manner, To make the Best Man fall, there needs no doing him any Wrong; no wounding his Faculties, no maiming his Judgment; no perverting his Will, no inflaming his Appetites, no heightning his Temptations: Let God barely withdraw his Supplies, and leave him *to himself*; that is,

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Permit him to the Power of his Natural Affections (which Affections Grace only covers and restrains, it never extinguishes during the course of this Life :) I say, Let a Man in the firmest state of Vertue be barely permitted by God to the Power of his Natural Affections, he necessarily sinks into the Level of Common Impotence without any other Influx.

This View of the State of Lapsed Nature I have drawn chiefly from the Doctrine of the Gospel. Not that I suppose the Notice of it to be confined to that part of the Scripture : For as it is a Truth that was always of Importance to be known, so we have little reason to believe but that it *was* known by the Church of God in all Ages from the Beginning.

In the Books of the Prophets, Nature's Insufficiency to Good, as likewise the Free Overtures of Grace to help it out, are plainly testify'd. Isa. 26. 12. Isa. 55. 12. &c. And yet more plainly in the Psalmist ; where all the Offices of the Holy Spirit conducing to Sanctification (as *Cleansing, Guiding, Helping, Renewing, Comforting, Strengthening, Establishing*) are mentioned as expressly as in the Gospel.

In the Writings of *Moses*, the Necessity of God's Assistance to Sanctification is delivered with formal Evidence: For after that God had instituted Circumcision as a Symbol of Purity, and had told the *Israelites* withal, That the true Discharge of their Duty towards him consisted in the Moral Circumcision of the Heart; *i. e.* In taking off their Love from the World, and placing it in the highest measure upon God; lest they should fail of their End, through Ignorance of their Means, and set about this great Work in Confidence of their own Ability, he *thus* instructs them, *Dent. 30. 6. The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.* Now what plainer words can be used to express, That although they stood obliged to love God with all their heart, yet of Themselves they were not able to work out this Issue; but that God was always ready to assist them to do it.

Gen. 6. 3. The *Striving* of God's Holy Spirit with Men for their Conversion, is spoken of as a known and received Truth before the Flood. And whereas it is said of several of the Patriarchs,

triarchs, That *they walked with God*; the Expression *with God* must reasonably be interpreted to signifie *With God's Assistance*, as well as *According to his Will*. Gen. 5. 22.
Gen. 6. 9.

Farther than this — Had I leisure to gratifie the Curious, I have large room to make it appear, That this very Doctrine was familiarly espoused by the Wise Men among the Heathen. Who, as they found by Conscious Experience That it was as little in a Man's Power to make himself Vertuous, as it was to make himself Fortunate; and as they likewise thought it suitable to the Goodness of God to take Care of Man's Greater Good as well as of his Lesser, so they espoused this Belief of God's assisting Men to Probity of Manners, as a Truth deducible from the first Principles of Reason. Accordingly *Plato* delivers it as a Rule received from *Socrates*, and laid down as a Fundamental in his Morality, That *Vertue was, sua pūez, a Divine Distribution*; and that Education, Precepts, Example, and Practical Diligence, were only partial Advances towards it; but that the State was got and finished by the Concurrence of God. And what can be more express, and withal more venerable,

venerable, than that of *Seneca*, when he says, *Nulla sine Deo mens bona, No Soul can be Good without the Divine Assistance.*

But I have asserted my Point from a better Authority; and therefore thought it fit to engage no farther in this way of Proof, as being superfluous in a Christian Auditory.

Having then offered This as the True Prospect of the State of Lapsed Nature; the next thing I purpose is a Vindication of this State from such Cavils as the Rash, and such Complaints as the Weak, are apt to conceive against it. And this I intend for the Subject of the following Discourse.

SERMON II.

St. MATTH. XXVI. 35.

Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.

IN a former Discourse upon this Text, I offer'd the Scriptural View and Account of Lapsed Nature ; from whence it fully appears, that no Man is sufficient either to be or to continue Good *in his own Strength*.

Which is a Doctrine directly serving the Two great Ends of Religion: *viz.* To exalt the Glory of God ; And to beat down all Pretences of Humane Pride.

But as all Truth is abusable, so we may be aware that many espouse this very Truth the more freely, only that they may the more freely form it into an Apology for careless Living. For Example, thus they argue :
 ' Our Nature is indisposed, perverse, and

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‘ insufficient to Good ; therefore, How miserable is our Condition, thus to be maimed before we were born, and made guilty before we knew how to act, and obnoxious for doing that which we cannot help ? How unaccountably fatal was the Indiscretion of our First Parents, which gave occasion to this Disorder ? And how unfortunate their Posterity, to whom it is derived ? Why did not God, with more appearance of Compassion, redintegrate our Nature after the Fall, and restore it to its Primitive Uprightness ? How much better had his Service been provided for by this Method, and Man more happily prevented from his Displeasure ? Which Displeasure of his we cannot now avoid, unless it be by his own Act ; whose Actings are not supposable to be at our Discretion. Now it is certain that all such kind of Arguings are profane, and tend to nothing but the Dishonour of God, and the Support and Countenance of Vice in the World : And therefore to obviate these Mischiefs, and to carry on my Contemplation to its proper Usefulness, I am obliged to enquire into the Reasons ---- *Why the Wisdom and Goodness of God thought fit to leave*

leave Mankind under this present state of Weakness and Insufficiency. From which Enquiry I shall show, 1. That what God Chiefly intended thereby was, To oblige us more strictly to live in a perpetual Dependance upon himself; And 2. That such a Dependance (put in Practice) will effectually cut off all possible pretences of humane Complaint.

My first Business is, to enquire into the Reasons why the Wisdom and Goodness of God thought fit to leave Mankind under this present state of Weakness, Insufficiency, and Disorder.

We must allow, That God could have immediately reformed that Disorder, which was brought upon our Nature by the First Disobedience; He could have check'd it in its first Authors, and not suffer'd it to be propagated to their Posterity; but in the mean time it would be much too bold, for any one to say that this would have been the Better Method: For 'tis certain, That in things proceeding from God, that which *Is*, is always Best; though we sometimes cannot penetrate into the Reasons that make it so. But as to the present Instance, we may (with Reverence) penetrate into its Rea-

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sions, and such as must be allow'd of.
Ex. gr.

1. Who can think but that when Sin had got footing in despite of God's Command, it was fit he should leave some Testimony of his Displeasure against it? Now let me say at present what I will prove afterwards, (*viz.*) That all the Weakness and Disorder that remains upon our Nature (if its Mischief be not farther extended by voluntary and chosen Malice) amounts to no more than such a Testimony of God's Displeasure against Sin.

There are some who believe, That all the Wast and Cragginess, and other seeming Deformities which appear upon the Face of the Earthly Globe, were occasioned by the violent Concussions that happened at *Noah's Flood*. Now should such be ask'd a Reason why God did not restore his Work to its original Beauty, they would think it sufficient to say, 'Twas fit it should stand so Monumentally, to deter future Ages from the like Provocations: And give me leave to say, It was fit that That Disorder which Sin in its first Beginnings brought upon our Nature should be left there, as a Monument of Caution.

tion against that Sin which occasioned it; and which, if farther comply'd with, will bring on Disorders much more deplorable than any we now feel.

Indeed it may be objected, that there is a great Disparity between these two Issues, Disorder left upon the Face of the Earth, and Disorder left upon the Frame of Man: For the Earth feels no Misery from the Deformity of its Surface; and when a Man looks upon the most craggy, squallid, or barren Parts of it, and reflects withal, that it is a Monument of God's Displeasure, he may receive a wholesome Instruction *against* Sin, but no Temptation *to* Sin from such a Prospect: Whereas the Disorder left upon *us*, is that whereby we *suffer*; It is the Fountain of our Misery, and our continual Temptation; and so runs us upon that Displeasure whereof it gives us Warning; and therefore we *Justly* complain of its Continuance.

This may be an Objection, and I confess it were of weight, had God left Man helpless under the Influence of this Disorder; and if, as we have propensions to Sin, so we laid under a Necessity of following those propensions: But when it is considered, that at the
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same time God has covenanted for Grace to be our Remedy ; and that he himself will give unto us whatsoever we want in our selves ; the Objection (as popular as it is) appears to be fallacious ; and (more than that) a Calumny against the Goodness of God.

For what Reason have we to complain of Natural Blindness, if *God* vouchsafes to be our Eyes and our Sight ? Of Natural Impotence, if *He* will be our Defence and Support ? Of Captivity to Lusts and Passions, if *He* be our Redeemer, and will set us free ? Now God is faithful, who has promised to be All This unto us : and therefore if we complain, the Reproach of our Complaint must return upon our selves ; and accordingly we shall find that They complain most of the Corruption of Nature, who would rather enjoy its Corruption, than use the appointed means to have it reformed.

2. The Goodness of God and his tender Care of humane Welfare, is more abundantly manifested in this our present state of Weakness and Infirmary.

God made the first Man Upright ; that is, in a state wherein he could be good in virtue
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of his own Abilities: which is the great difference from ours, that we pretend to repine at. But if God at this time, though he do not make Man upright, yet vouchsafes to nurse, guide, and train him to such a state of Uprightness as himself will be pleased withal; Who can say but the *Issue* is the same to Man? but moreover, the Care and Attendance upon him is infinitely greater.

If a Lord give his Servant an entire Estate, he discovers a kind and liberal Mind in so doing; but if (instead of this) he shall make daily Visits to him, and from time to time provide him with what is fit; none can doubt but that in this Method he discovers a more constant and unwearied Love? It was a remarkable Proof of God's Favour to the *Israelites*, when by his Donation and Conduct he brought them to possess the Land of *Canaan*; but for all this, we must acknowledge that his Favour to them was more conspicuous to the Observation both of themselves and others, while he daily took care of their Meat and Drink, and indeficiency of their Cloathing in the naked and barren Wilderness. And this is an exact Emblem of our present Case. How daily, how minutely,

nutely, how incessant, is the Vigilance and Provision of God for Man in this state of Infirmary? Were any thing Laborious to Omnipotence, and could there be more and less of Pains, where all things are easie; I might say that God takes more pains to save any particular Soul, than he did to make, or does to govern the Universal World. He made the World by the Breath of his Command; and so he governs it: for it has no power to resist. But where he has placed an Elective Power of Resisting, *There* to watch over that Power, to attend every Motion of our Hearts, to check every Evil, and to cherish every good one; to encourage it into Act, to reward it with Complacency, to propagate and establish it by Supplies of that good Principle which first set it a-work; to feed, and lead, and drive, and discipline his Flock, to retrieve the Wandering, to wait upon the Tender and Weak, and to carry the Impotent upon his Shoulders (as he is pleas'd to symbolize his Care of Man under the Comparison of the good Shepherd;) This is a Series of Care and Attention as well as Love, which the OEconomy of whole Nature besides does not require.

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This indeed is the most amazing Contemplation that can enter into our Thoughts, and which made Holy *Job* break out into those words of Wonder, *Chap. 7. 14. Lord what is man that thou should'st magnifie him, and that thou should'st set thy heart upon him? and that thou should'st visit him every morning, and try him every moment?* This is the wonderful Goodness of God towards Man in his present state; and this indeed is the only Title that every Man ought to value himself upon; ev'n this, That God values him so much; but still to be more humble, because he can so little deserve it.

3. A Third Reason why the Wisdom and Goodness of God thought fit to leave us under this state of Infirmary, is this; (*viz.*) That he might thereby oblige us more strictly to live in a perpetual Dependance upon himself. And this is that Reason I shall chiefly insist on, and proceed to shew what is the Nature and what the Fruits of this Dependance upon God.

There is a Dependance upon God which we may call Passive, because it relates not to any Act of our Choice or Will; for we must depend upon him *whether we will or no.*

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We *must* depend upon God for our Life, and for every moment of its Continuance. For let us love Life never so much, we cannot continue it to any Term or Period beyond God's Pleasure and Designation. I mean not that God has fixt a fatal Period to every Man's Life. The Notion of Fate diminishes from the Honour of Providence: But I mean that God, for the very Manifestation of his Providence, suffers not humane Life to wear out and determine according to the ordinary Laws of Nature; but takes the Measures of it into his own arbitrary Disposal, and either extends or shortens it as he sees fit. We may observe of all other Creatures, that Nature governs the Measures of their Lasting; that (abating Violences) their Period is generally uniform, and they *wear out* their Thread of Life in proportion to that strength of which it is spun. But Man seldom wears out his Thread, it is for the most part suddenly *cut off*; and Men die, perhaps in equal numbers every Year, through the whole Interval from the Cradle to mature Old Age.

Again, We depend upon God for all the Event and Success of our Undertakings:
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And this is another Instance which God has selected to his own Disposal, and exempted from the ordinary Laws of Nature, on purpose to give Testimony to his Providence in governing the World. For undoubtedly, it is but suitable to Nature's Law; That the *Race should be to the Swift, and the Battle to the Strong*; That the best Contrivances and Means should have the best Success. And yet it often falls out otherwise in the Case of Man; where the wisest Projects are defeated, and the most hopeful means are controul'd; and *Time and Chance happens unto all: Time and Chance, i. e.* At sundry Times sundry Events fall out, which they who look no farther than the Events themselves, call *Chance*, because they fall out quite contrary both to their Intentions and their Hopes; though at the same time, in respect of God's Providence over-ruling in these Events, it were profane to call them *Chance*, for they are pure Designation.

I may add farther, That we depend upon God for all our *Actions*: For since our *Life* depends upon God, and *Life* is our sole Capacity of Acting, it must follow, That in respect of this Remote Causality All our

Actions depend upon God. Yet I do not say that our Actions do so depend upon God, as that we need his immediate Concurrence to all we do; or that we cannot exert any Motion or Sensation without his actual Assistance: Because the Allowance of This would be attended with several absurd Consequences. For, 1. Supposing our Actions to be *Evil*, the imputing God's Concurrence to *such*, would be a Reflexion upon his Holiness. And, 2. Supposing our Actions to be *Indifferent*; yet, to say that God's actual Concurrence is necessary to *such*, is no other than a Disparagement to his Workmanship; for it implies an Original Defect in his Creature.

To illustrate this matter by the Compositions of Art: It is the End and Design of a Watch to move; and by that Motion to distinguish Time: Now suppose an Artist should make a Watch of never so curious a Figure, but yet such a one as that its Index would not move unless he that made it obliged himself to the perpetual Attendance of his Finger; what would our Censure be of such a piece of Work?

To Move, to Feel, to Perceive, to Deliberate, Resolve, and Execute, are Actions for which Man was designed; his Nature, Station, and Duty, charge them upon him: Now if we suppose Man not able to discharge those Functions and Offices for which he was designed; without the perpetual Attendance of his Maker, how can such a Creature be cleared from the Imputation of an Original Defect?

There is indeed another sort of Actions in respect of which this Objection will not lie. All our Actions, so far as they are morally Good, depend so immediately upon God, that they require his actual Concurrence to the doing of them: And yet this does not imply an Original Defect in Man, but only a *Fall* from that Original Perfection wherein he was first made. And why under this state of Man's Depravation, the Divine Wisdom chose rather to aid and support him by a perpetual Attendance, than to reintegrate him to his primitive Strength; is the particular Case whereof I am now assigning the Reasons.

I have spoken hitherto of our *Passive* Dependence upon God, our Dependence of
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Necessity ; which therefore, as such, can carry no Vertue in it : And yet it is the immediate matter of our Active Dependance, so that one Turn of our *Will* can change our Necessity into Vertue. *Ex. gr.*

We depend upon God *whether we will or no*, whether we think of it or no ; But then let us depend upon him *Intentionally, Willingly*, and we do That that is properly Religious, and what God will both Accept and Reward.

To induce us thus to husband our Necessity, and improve it wisely into Vertue, let us consider on this manner ----- We depend upon God for our Life and Being, and why shou'd we not *chuse* to do so ? For, did we depend upon Nature for it, Nature might give us a *long* Life, but she cou'd not give us a *good* one ; and then what would it be of Advantage to us that we have lived ? Whereas now the same God that gives either a long Life or a short, can make each of them to be an equal Blessing.

We depend upon God for the Success of our Undertakings ; and why should we not *chuse* to do so ? Did we depend for it upon our own Wisdom and Strength, by the same Rule,

Rule, Every one that could over-power us or out-wit us, had it at his Discretion to defeat and undo us: Whereas under the Disposals of God we are guarded against these Issues of Common Enmity; and either our Undertakings are sure to succeed; or else, what is better, we are sure to reap Advantage from their Disappointment; so long as our necessary Dependance upon God is sanctify'd by a pious Resolution to depend upon him willingly, and to resign our selves to his Disposals.

We depend upon God for our power of Acting: And why should we not *chuse* to do so? since the same God that supports us in the power of Acting, is only able to regulate and conduct what we do to our Advantage; without which Issue, our power of Acting must sink and degenerate into a bare power of doing our selves harm.

But the principal Object of our Dependance is still behind; and that is, *God's Grace, in order to our Sanctification*, and to enable us to discharge the Offices of Religion and Vertue.

To look and seek to God for this, is the main business of our Dependance; because
Grace

Grace is the Chief of all God's Benefits: So great a Benefit is the Grace of God, that there is no other Good *in Comparison of it*; no other Good at all *without it*.

And therefore it is that our Saviour when arguing the Certainty of God's Paternal Love, from the Love that is generally observable in all Natural Parents, he thus expresses himself, *Luke 11. 13. If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your Children, how much more will your heavenly Father give* (give what? *give good gifts*; so the Antithesis requires, and so one would think the Expression should run: but instead of this, it runs *thus How much more will your heavenly Father give*) *the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Implying, that the Holy Spirit is equivalent to *all other good Gifts*; nay, as much exceeding them, as the Love and Power of God exceeds that of Man.

And therefore however we may esteem Long Life and Prosperous Fortunes, yet so indifferent are they in the Event, That God bestows them without any Indication either of his Love or Hatred (as that Passage of *Solomon* is to be interpreted *Eccles. 9. 1.*) For God bestows them not only upon the
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Good, but upon the Evil and the Unthankful; upon those that seek them not from him; upon those that do not acknowledge them as received at his hands; and finally, upon those that are never the *better* for *having* received them; as will appear at the adjusting of Accounts.

But on the other hand, *sanctifying* Grace is a Pearl of greater Price than to be cast away upon the Regardless. This is a Certain Benefit and a lasting Good; and therefore God disposes it upon another sort of Condition (*viz.*) *to them that ask him*; i. e. to them that wisely estimate, and worthily value, and earnestly desire this excellent Gift.

And indeed when we consider the Duty of Prayer, qualify'd with those Circumstances that the Holy Scripture does require, (*viz.*) That it must be *Instant, Fervent, Importunate, Violent*; we may conclude that Prayer it self is as certain a *Proof* of the Communications of Grace, as it is a *Means* to procure them: For if we must pray *Instantly, Fervently, Importunately, Violently*, what are the *Things* we must pray for in this manner? No worldly Need can justify such

a Desire : Our Desire of Life or any of its Accommodations, in *such a measure*, would be Immoderate, Impatient, and Sinful ; and therefore it is that Submission and Resignation is prescribed to our Requests in respect of all *these things* : Grace therefore is the only Blessing that can be worthy *such a measure* of Importunity : This alone we may desire instantly, and with Impatience of Denial, and yet not exceed : Grace is *that Kingdom of Heaven that suffereth Violence, and the Violent take it by force*.

In this Office of Prayer, and in an Endeavour of Christian-living suitable and comporting with it, (without which Comportment the Efficacy of our Prayers must necessarily be voided;) I say, in these two Offices of praying for God's Grace, and walking in the Road of God's Grace, consists the *Practice* of our Dependance upon him. The Fruits whereof I shall next enquire into; and shew that through this Dependance upon God (which our present Weakness and Insufficiency enforces) Man reaps greater Advantages from his present State, than could have been look'd for, had he been restored to the State of Primitive Perfection.

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And to prove This, it will be Argument enough, if I shew that Man has *now* Provision made, 1. For a safer Vertue; and 2. For a more commendable Vertue; and, 3. For a more excellent Reward than otherwise he could have had.

1. Man has now Provision made for a safer Vertue than *Adam* had when he was first formed. *Adam* was left in the hands of his own Counsel; And so the Author of *Ecclus.* tells us, *Chap. 15. 24.* where he says, *God made Man as he pleas'd from or in the beginning, and left him in the hands of his own Counsel, &c.* For if we interpret this Text to mean, that Man has Counsel, Wisdom, Liberty or Strength, to chuse and pursue all that is necessary to Godliness, I am sure it can be apply'd to *no man since the Fall*: and this the whole Current of Sacred Writ makes demonstrable.

But *Adam* was furnished with such degrees of Perfection, that it was *fit* he should be left in the hands of his own Counsel. But withal, we know that *Adam* fell under his own hands; and after he was once fall'n, after he had darken'd his Soul, weaken'd and poison'd his Nature, by giving up Reason to

the power of Appetite, he must necessarily have sunk under the dominion of Sin, he must necessarily have grown more and more indulging, careless, desperate, and without thoughts or power of Repenting, (as the Case of the fall'n Angels was) had it not been for the Grace of that Covenant which was founded purely upon the occasion of his Fall. For all the subsequent Power that *Adam* had to please God, and to walk as a Man converted from the error of his way from that time forward, issued not at all from the Strength of his Nature, as if Recovered by the means of Reflexion; Nature was as much indisposed and insufficient to produce such a Reconciling Change *in him*, as it is at this Day in any of his Posterity.

And accordingly we may observe from the History, That *before* the New Covenant was pronounc'd and ratified in the Promised Seed, there was no footstep of Repentance that appear'd either in *Adam* or *Eve*; but merely a shifting off their Crime, as if in Design to preclude their Repentance; and therefore it appears that all the subsequent Power that *Adam* had whereby to Repent, and to please God, did issue purely from the Succour of
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that Grace which God vouchsafed him in Compassion to his new-contracted Disorder; and upon which he might now rest for the Course of his future Obedience, with much more Security, than he could upon his *former Native* Perfections. Now to argue home to my Purpose.

Let us suppose that after *Adam* had fall'n, yet (this notwithstanding) God had ordain'd, that Original Uprightness should have equally descended upon all his Posterity; yet we must allow that any one of his Posterity, though born with the same degrees of Uprightness that he *was*, might yet have been foil'd by the Wiles of the Tempter, and so have fall'n as well as he *did*: Now had they so fall'n (I mean fall'n only personally and for themselves) had they so fall'n, and in the mean while the Covenant of Grace not been founded (as it was only founded upon the Account of the Propagation of Sin) how could any such have ever recover'd to that State from which they fell, or indeed to any Degree of Acceptance with God? Their Case must have been as desperate as that of the fall'n Angels was before; they would have follow'd the propension of Appetite, which

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was now made natural to them ; and aimed at nothing more than to enjoy the Pleasures of farther Depravation.

Whereas on the other hand, according to the present state of things, and for the succour of our Nature as it is now infirm, there is a Provision made through the New Covenant for a safer Adherence to Vertue ; and *such* a Provision as every Christian may have the Benefit of ; unless it be in the case of affected Slothfulness, and wilful Indulgence in Sin.

Sin indeed may more easily make its *first Breaches* upon us, by reason of our Present Infirmary ; either through Ignorance or Surprise ; but it cannot get Dominion over us without our own deliberate Option : For, it is an exprefs Gospel-Promise against the *Power of Sin*, that *It shall not have Dominion over us* ; against the *Power of the Devil*, that *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the World* ; against the *Power of Temptations*, that *God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be Tempted above what we are able* ; against Discouragement from the Pretext of our Infirmities, that *we may do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us* ; and in case of falling, *We have an Advocate with*

with the Father, and a Propitiation for our Sins : by means whereof, the Favour of God may be Regained, and that Principle of Grace Recovered, upon which (as upon a new Stock) we may grow good again, and to an entire Acceptance.

And now say, How could the Safety of humane Vertue be better provided for? Or in case we want Vertue, of whom can we complain?

But, 2. The present state of our Nature, weak and depraved as it is, gives Man the Opportunity of a more commendable Vertue.

From the state of greater Uprightness and Order of Mind, and Composure of our Affections, we might expect more *elevated Thoughts, Conceptions* more worthy of God, *Acts of Adoration* more steady and affectionate, and a Discharge of Moral Duties less obnoxious to Errour and Interruption: But in the mean time the present state of our Deficiency has no Reason to complain; when it is vouchsafed thus much of Indulgence; that the most abrupt Groanings of an humble Soul, prest with Infirmities, and wrestling with Temptations, and thence feelingly imploring

ploring the Assistance of God, is a more acceptable Sacrifice to him, than any Hymns that the most exalted Understanding can dictate, or any Office that the most composed Affections can perform.

Now *Thus* it is, and *This* is the Reason of it, (*viz.*) Because all the Notion we have of humane Vertue is this --- That it is a Conflict maintained by Rectify'd Reason against the lower Appetites: according to which Notion, the Holy Scripture calls the Christian Life a *State of Warfare*. Now as Affections and Lusts do make the Opposition, and occasion the Conflict, so it cannot be doubted, but that they give the great Commendation, if not the very Being, to our Vertue. To kill a Passion, to subdue a rising Motion of Anger, Hatred, Pride, or Carnality, is the worthiest Oblation we can offer to God; and the more of these we have to subdue, the more we have to offer: *When I am weak, then am I strong*, says the Apostle; and thus we may interpret him --- The more Infirmities there are in our Nature, the more eminent Opportunities we have to be Conquerours in the Christian Conflict.

Wish therefore we may, that Vertue were more *cheap*, or more *easie* to us; but we ought to remember, That at the same time we wish *away* that which gives Vertue her best Title both to present Commendation and future Reward.

Which is another Advantage of our present State, (*viz.*) That it makes way for a more Excellent Reward.

To dispute whether *Adam*, if he had not sinned, should at some Period of his Earthly Life have been Translated into Heaven, and there united to God in his Eternal Enjoyments, were only to be wise above what is written: If we will confine our Judgment to what is written; Nothing appears *there*, but that the *Promise of Heaven* was made in *Christ alone*, whose Undertaking for Mankind commenced purely upon the Occasion of the Fall.

And if we observe the Order of that solemn Prayer which our Saviour makes for his Disciples and the succeeding Church, *Joh. 17.* where *ver. 17.* he prays, *Holy Father, sanctifie them by thy Truth*; and after this, in a distinct Request, at *ver. 24.* he says, *Father, I will that they whom thou hast*

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given me be with me where I am: We may reasonably argue from This, That the utmost Sanctification humane Nature is capable of, carries in it no Pretensions to Heaven, but that This is a Title that rises simply from the Compact of our Lord's Mediation.

It is manifestly evident from frequent Passages of Holy Writ, That (although not simply *Bliss it self*, yet) the *highest degrees* of Bliss are annex'd to the Doctrine of the Cross; to Afflictions, Sufferings, and Self-Denial; none of which had had any Place or Occasion, had it not been for the *Depravation* of our Nature: For their End is perfectly Medicinal, and design'd to correct that *Depravation*, and to bring us to the Vertues of Patience and Humility; Vertues which we are naturally averse from, and yet they are necessary to reform and sanctifie our Nature.

Now if Afflictions, Sufferings, and Self-Denial, are the things which are said to *work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, and yet all these Methods of Discipline draw their Usefulness from the very State of our Corruption; it cannot be denied but that this present State
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of ours does give occasion and make way for a more excellent Reward than Man *Un-depraved* could ever have hoped for.

What Room is there then for complaining of our Condition? What for Reviling Our first Parents? What for Censuring the divine Disposal of Things? Our Nature is burden'd with Weakness and Disorder, but it has its Remedy in a Religious Dependence, which is able to turn all to Advantage. And therefore to do right to this Contemplation, we ought to close it with Acknowledgment and Wonder — *Oh the depth of the Riches of the Wisdom and Goodness of God!*

To whom be Glory, &c.

FINIS.

SERMONS *Preach'd by E. Young;*
and Sold by Walter Kettilby at the
Bishop's Head in S. Paul's Church-
Yard.

'A Sermon Preach'd before the Queen at *White-Hall*, on *Easter-day* 1693.

A Sermon Preach'd before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, at *Guild-Hall Chapel*, *Febr. 4.* 1682.

A Sermon Preach'd at *Salisbury* on *Sunday* July 30. 1693. Being the Time of the Affizes.

A Sermon Preach'd at the Affizes held in *Winchester*, July 11. 1695.

Two Sermons Preach'd at *Winchester* Affizes: The first on *Feb. 26.* 1694. The last on *July 14.* 1686.

Two Sermons Preach'd at *White-Hall*. The first on *Sunday* April 15. The second on *Sunday* April 22. 1694.

